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Society as a University

BY
PROFESSOR JOHN ERSKINE

Educational Director

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SOCIETY AS A UNIVERSITY

BY

PROFESSOR JOHN ERSKINE

Chairman Army Educational Commission. Educational Director of
the University

THE university which we are about to open here has been built in response to certain needs. It is conditioned by the war background from which those needs have grown, but it looks also to the future. We intend here to save for some good use if possible the time that would otherwise be spent in irksome waiting for the ship that is to take us home; we intend to teach and to study whatever things the waiting army may desire to learn; we intend also to seize out of the very handicaps and necessities of the moment some lasting advantage. In our earlier school or college days perhaps we thought of education as merely one of the special enterprises which a civilized state is expected to support. Perhaps we thought that schools and colleges spring from earth full-grown, that methods of instruction, however unpleasant, are inevitable and unchangeable, and that the best use of a classroom is to escape from it once for all into the real world. We may never have cared greatly to learn; we may have thought that no red-blooded creature ever cared to teach. Now, however, we are reduced to a society of fellow-citizens, each trying to help the other to a little knowledge. The university which rises in these simple buildings and with such meagre equipment illustrates to us what education really is when stated in simple and sincere terms. Here we find in what sense society itself—that is, any group of human beings who live together—may be for the best intellectual purposes a university.

I

In the first place we observe that this university is devoted to adult education. Even if we are not all somewhat advanced in years beyond the age when men usually attend school or college, at least the experience of the war has been for most of us the equivalent of time, and we approach our studies here with a maturity not vouchsafed to the average freshman. Did we ever think it disgraceful for a man to be still going to school when he is, as we say, beyond the school age? May we learn here and carry back home with us the important truth that no man should ever consider himself beyond the school age. The education of adults ought to be as natural in society as the education of youth. There was a time in American history when a college boy left his course at the end of the sophomore or junior year, and earned the money to complete his education. Fifty years ago some of the best New England colleges postponed the spring term until fairly late in the summer, and began the autumn term fairly early, so that in mid-winter the seniors could be free for teaching school. The record is clear that the students who in this way varied their studies with practice achieved far better results as scholars than those do now whom we try to cram for life—try, that is, to pour into them, as though into a reservoir, all the wisdom, all the technical and professional knowledge, all the artistic inspiration, all the good manners, all the ideas they will ever need. It is to be feared that the college graduate who is thus charged once for all with culture must be economical of the supply; many graduates are. Yet men and women do become well-educated; often they explain the fact by saying that they learned more in some

experience or other after they left college than in all the classrooms they attended. Their explanation amounts to this—that having come in contact with real life they were aware from time to time of a need of fresh intellectual equipment for their work, and they were fortunate enough to find what they needed, either in books or in some person who shared the wisdom with them; their life, therefore, became an alternation of study and practice—the study fitting them to proceed with their career, and each new experience in their career showing them more clearly what they needed to study.

We may find the illustration in ourselves. The work to which we were appointed in the army was for the most part predestined by the preparation we had made in civil life, and the studies which we now care to follow are in many cases suggested to us by what we did in the war. We have discovered new needs, we say; now we shall study to supply them. Yet we would not turn to a university for help if we had not been accustomed to some sort of study, and we certainly would not have asked for the particular instruction we now desire had not our recent experience taught us something about ourselves. If any man thinks this state of mind temporary, belonging to the accidents of war, we hope here in the university to make such a state of mind seem the permanent ideal for all men and women. We hope that our experiment here may spread the habit of life-long study at home. Why should a man give up the good custom of withdrawing occasionally from his work to secure the training which that very work has caused him to desire? The foolishness of trying to cram for life, as we have tried in our educational system, would be demonstrated, even if we had no other proof of it, by the number of things of which we had no immediate need when we left school, and which have rusted in our memory until the unlucky day when we wished to use them and found them out of repair. We tried to learn such matters at the wrong time of life; we studied too many things at once. Geography, for example, is considered still by many people a school subject, but were we ever so much interested in studying it as we are now? Whether we are twenty years old or thirty at the moment, why should we not study geography under the best instruction as soon as we discover the importance of it?

Of course such a point of view, could we make it prevail in America, would force us to change much of our educational machinery. We should then find it an impertinent thing to impose entrance examinations upon men and women who ask simply to be taught. We are rather proud that we have no entrance examinations for this university. There is no reason why any person, so long as he is sane, should not have access freely to the instruction he desires. Whether the candidate can profit by the course will in many cases be evident enough to whoever is competent to give the course; but often where the teacher would expect otherwise, the instruction will prove unexpectedly valuable for the student, simply because his experience has taught him a need which he alone best understands. The place for examinations is at the end of the course. Yet even in the giving of degrees and certificates there is some foolishness unless men preserve their common sense—unless they remember that what a man knows is in no way conditioned by the parchment, however sealed and signed, and that a genuine access of knowledge will appear sufficiently and inevitably in a man's conduct, in his power to live more wisely, more unselfishly, more happily.

The second aspect of our university work here, growing out of the conditions of the moment and yet holding a prophecy for education at home, is that the teaching here will be done by fellow-citizens—that is, the faculty will be drawn from officers and men who yesterday were simply comrades in arms. To be sure they are asked to undertake this work because of their standing as educators in well-known schools and colleges, but we prefer to think of them in the significance just suggested, as good citizens sharing with their fellows the advantage they happen to possess in intellectual wealth. Just as we have thought of education on the whole as a subdivision of life

something apart, not vital, so we think of teaching too exclusively as a special profession. Yet if the business of education is to help a man to live, if the best education is alternate study and experience, then surely teaching should be a normal function for any generous man or woman. As a matter of fact, the world of education, far from being an unselfish world, as we sometimes permit ourselves to think, is really the very citadel of selfishness. A few teachers indeed devote their lives to spreading knowledge, but society as a whole studies only for its own purposes, and the individual man and woman feels no responsibility to pass on to their fellows their share of light, as precious and for the giver as simple as the cup of cold water. We content ourselves with thinking that the public schools or the paid teacher at the university can tend to education for us; we need not worry about it. There once were men and women, in days long gone by, who thought the ordinary charity of life should be the affair of specialists—of the monk, the priest, the hermit. We now understand better the obligation upon us all to provide clothing and shelter for our fellows in need. The most selfish man now loses a little sleep, even in a comfortable bed, if he knows a beggar is couched on the cold pavement in front of his house. But this is the only kind of charity we are as yet deeply interested in, and this is but physical charity. We are not yet quick to share the intellectual bread and drink and warmth which may have come to us by good fortune. The beggar and the starving man trouble us; we are even worried over the poor who do not realize how poor they are; we would teach them to take their part in society. But we are not yet greatly troubled by ignorance in a man, though his ignorance may bring himself and his family to many kinds of disaster—though his ignorance may poison us with disease, or with what is as dangerous, with prejudice and the beginnings of hate. We are little disturbed when such a man is conscious of his ignorance and would be glad to learn; still less does it cost us worry if he is quite content not to know. If in this university we can adopt an unselfish attitude toward those fellow-citizens who wish to be taught the knowledge in which we are richer than they, perhaps we may take home with us a new ideal of intellectual service. That the ideal is needed, we can illustrate once more from ourselves. When a young man asks, "Have you such or such a course for me?" if we are compelled to say, "No, this course is not yet ready," the possible student, since he cannot get the particular course he thought he wanted, will turn away as though his concern with the university were ended. He is surprised if we suggest to him that since he is so far advanced in his studies as to outstrip what the university can offer, he should himself do some teaching to share his knowledge with those who know less.

The third aspect of our program here which we hope will be permanent in education at home, is the preparation we have tried to make to teach a man what he needs. This preparation might seem to be inevitable and the idea of it so obvious that it need not be mentioned at all, but in fact very few schools and colleges in the United States are organized to meet the particular and immediate demands of individuals. When you apply at the door of a university for instruction in a particular thing, you find that the university expects you to become a candidate for a degree, or to register in a certain school; it expects to label you; you must be a candidate for something. If you apply at a high school, you are grouped for convenience of administration with certain others, presumably desiring the same things as yourself, and in order to make the group symmetrical to the eye of the administrator you and the other members of the group are all required to take a few courses which you all know you do not want. Even here in the peculiarly free university which we are improvising we have heard the question raised of a student who takes three courses, let us say, one in the College of Business, one in the College of Letters, and one in the College of Art—to what college does he belong? Of course he belongs to all three, or rather, to none of them; he is a candidate, if you choose, for knowledge, and he is chiefly in-

terested in life. The record ought to be complete and satisfying even to the statistician, when we know which courses he is for the moment following. Unfortunately, however, the ideal of teaching people just what they need at the moment when they need it, is sometimes stated in a negative way. We sometimes hear that education will be successful when this or that subject shall not be taught. Yet the absence of a subject will not of itself make a good curriculum. There is danger also that when we try to give people just what they need we may give them something temporary and not what they most profoundly need; there is danger that we may not provide for the demands of the day after tomorrow or the day after that, when the students shall have outgrown the satisfied need of today. It is the hope of this university, not only to supply each student with such instruction as his present condition calls for, but to teach him also the means of access to more knowledge as his desire for the knowledge may grow.

II

What the needs of all of us may be, we discover in a general way by observing the experience of the world and of the men immediately about us in these last four or five years. Adult education we have learned to look upon as of the first importance, since the war has taught us what continuous training is necessary to keep our imagination young and our attitude toward life supple and adaptable. It is our frailty as human beings, unless we watch ourselves ceaselessly, to become stiff and unbending in a world that changes always. Were we not radicals at twenty-one? We will be cool and conservative at thirty, unless some blessed chance or some exceptional wisdom keeps us adjusted to each new day. Momentum counts for as much in human characters as it does in railway trains. It hurts us to stop a habit or to change the direction of it—most of all an intellectual habit. When some such catastrophe as the war uproots us, forcing us to change our way of life and our ideas, we observe that our neighbors fall into groups according as they are quick or slow to adapt themselves to the new world, or according as they are unable to adapt themselves at all. Some men who had spent their lives in the city with small opportunity for experience out-of-doors, found themselves quickly at home in the camp and in the trench. Others seemed unable to face the hard fact that they had been rooted out of their old ways; they sought even in camp and trench for their accustomed environment. Among the students coming to this university—shall I admit even among the teachers?—not all are aware of what should be obvious, that this university is unlike other universities, that it has not the same equipment in laboratories, in libraries, in dormitories, and certainly not the same wealth of tradition. These examples illustrate more than our moment or this place; men everywhere and at all times are slow to change their mental attitude. It is no great wonder that the occasional genius whose imagination is alert and whose spirit is supple to the facts just as they are, and just as they change, should lead his fellows. Once he has turned them in a certain direction, however, it is no wonder that he should some day incur their dislike; for he will continue to change, and they will prefer the first path he taught them. Whatever consistence of ideals we may strive for, there is no persistent way of life, outside of growth itself. Last year's wisdom, slavishly conserved, produces no light for today. The best country, it would seem, and the safest, is that in which the greatest number of citizens are supple-minded. The most dangerous country, as we have found to our cost, is that in which the intellectual momentum is strongest, in which ideas have become fixed and organized. To itself such a country will seem sincere. Unfortunately it will also seem to itself adaptable and supple. But only by training, by life-long education, by the most vigilant self-examination, can any man or any nation remain open-minded. It is the irony of this insidious momentum that we all think ourselves peculiarly open in spirit, and wish that the foreigner were not

so fond of his tradition. We pity the Hindu in the fever districts who is reluctant to boil the drinking water; his ancestors were not in the habit of boiling it. Poor fool, we think. We ourselves, however, are not likely to adopt the metric system. Of course there is every reason why we should adopt it, except the Hindu reason that our fathers got on without it. We are not greatly different, we highly civilized men, from the spiders and the bees and the other small creatures of instinct whom we study sometimes with wonder and sometimes with patronizing self-satisfaction, noticing that what they do has been suggested by instinct until instinct itself has become habit. Man has been tempted in some phases of his philosophy to believe that his instincts, if left to themselves, would prove as wise as seem the instincts of the bee or of the spider. The popular theorists of the eighteenth century spread the hope that all of us might be perfect if our natural instincts were allowed to develop undisturbed, and that such an unembarrassed development of instinct would be the best education. The men and women who sought happiness by this program found the results somewhat disastrous. Other philosophers have believed that though not all instincts are necessarily good, perhaps the good instincts might be exclusively developed until they should become habits, and goodness, after our instincts were once selected, might be automatic. Yet even though such a program of education were possible, it is not likely that the sort of goodness which habitual instincts will provide would answer the demands of a changing world. It is really not enough to be good. One must be intelligent also and, if possible, wise. This simple truth is not often realized in practice; it might well be the chief object of our study here. The noblest conception of life is not that which would make goodness automatic; it is that which would add intelligence to goodness, which by study would cultivate suppleness of mind and keep the imagination alert; it is that which in this world of shifting problems would keep the character sound and the mind always on guard.

Once more we might illustrate from our experience here in setting up this university. We have heard some complaints from students—let us admit again from teachers also—that we lack books, that we lack tables and desks and chairs and office room, that we lack laboratories. Once more we are creatures of intellectual momentum. Our chief concern here, as it ought to be in any university, is to learn something about life itself, about society, about citizenship; is it true that men who have gone through the experience of this war cannot teach each other anything important about life unless they are furnished with textbooks? The answer of course will be that we are here to study other things than life—algebra, for example, or chemistry, or law, and that the material for such study is chiefly stored up in books. True; but education has for a long time become too much a matter of textbooks. We can make experiments in physics only if the proper instruments are put into our hands, but if we really understood physics we could make the instruments. We have studied the history of science too much as we have studied other history, in a book; yet to know science we should live again the experience of each historic genius, we should invent anew the apparatus, make the new experiment, and arrive at the new demonstration. A really great teacher of law will teach his pupils to deduce the principles from such cases as normally come before them. Can no legal problems be found except those stored away in textbooks? Can we find nothing for the mind to lay hold on in the life around us? Some of us suspect that the consternation we feel at the lack of textbooks or other physical equipment is the realization that intellectual momentum has carried us out of touch with life; we suspect that a wise man would find enough things to study and to teach right here in the daily events of our community. But it may be objected again that the great poets, the great novelists, and the great historians of the world left us masterpieces which cannot be improvised, and which, of course, cannot be studied unless they are here in the university library. Well, they

are here. But if they were not, would it be such a terrible misfortune if we were forced to express ourselves a little, to make some portrait of our own life, to become to some extent ourselves poets, novelists and historians? Obviously there was a day when men, studying their own lives, did write their own books. Our destiny is nobler than merely to ponder what other men have felt, have done, and have said, instead of feeling and doing and saying things ourselves which other men would care to know. In the countryside about us here, in the town of Beaune, in the city of Dijon, history and art may be studied to whatever extent we please. But it is in the end less profitable to pass hours admiring the beauty with which men long dead built their houses, than to work ourselves here in our university camp to make our own barracks and lecture halls beautiful. Our opportunity is to recover our intellectual independence in a world of too many books, too many libraries, and too much physical equipment. When a man is once independent and alert to the life about him, all these things are precious as aids. They are, however, the mere baggage and incumbrance of education when we find nothing to study except in books, and can arrive at no science unless the laboratory is made for us by somebody else.

III

The new world into which we are now entering will be, it seems, a world of experts. However we may have blundered happily through life before now, no man can reasonably hope for success or happiness hereafter unless he have the training to contribute his share to the society in which he moves. The war, more than any other experience we have passed through, has proved the advantages of training. It has also proved how easily skill can be supplied where men desire it. Ships have been built, guns have been made, troops have been led by men whose occupation was quite different until they answered the call of the moment, but in each case they underwent training for their new task, and their success was in proportion to that instruction. We begin to see that in the improvised armies of the world the undertrained man has been carried as a dead weight. We begin to see that society at all times must carry the ignorant as so much handicap for the educated. For the moment I speak of education in those things which help us to earn our living. No man about us can be poor without making us poor also; for we shall have to give him alms on the street, or if we prefer not to give alms that way, we must pay taxes to support the asylum or the hospital, or we must contribute to the charitable society which furnishes him with free medicine when he is ill or with shelter when he cannot pay his rent. Had we no other than selfish motives, we should still be obliged by every means possible to cure this man of his poverty—that is, to supply him with the technical training and to implant in him if we can the necessary energy to support himself. Just how shall we approach this problem? Shall we force the lazy and the poor to work, or shall we educate them to such a point of view that they themselves will desire further training and will feel ashamed not to take their part in citizenship? This question will press upon us from many angles; shall society protect itself by physical or legal force, or shall it use the spiritual force of education? Upon our answer to this question we may be sure the happiness of the new world will turn.

But the question of training is not limited to the economic field. Even though a man can earn his living, even though he flatter himself that he is in no way a burden upon society, he may have forgotten that life itself is an art or science, and that citizenship demands more than mere good-will. In the new world we shall expect men and women to be trained, not only to earn their living, but, much more, to take their part in the state. If we have learned nothing else from Germany, that country of superb efficiency in material things, we ought to have learned from her that men must be expert in citizenship unless they will be led like sheep, and that a nation must be

expert in world affairs unless they will give their consent to the committing of international crimes. Without expertness in the citizenship of one's nation and in the larger citizenship of the world, we shall be victims of that intellectual momentum which everywhere endangers human virtue and happiness. We no longer explain the causes of war with the brilliant simplicity of Carlyle; when two armies face each other, and when we ask why those who had no personal quarrel with each other are now preparing to blow each other's brains out, it is not enough to answer, they are there because their rulers had a quarrel and were shrewd enough to send others to fight it out; we now know that this explanation is insufficient. But just what is the cause of any particular war, no one knows—at least, the historians who have studied the causes most profoundly usually disagree. It is time with some humility to study the effects of international manners—to seek, that is, such expertness in world conduct as may avoid setting up new causes for war even in the attempt to frame a lasting peace.

It may be long before we reach world expertness, but in each nation the fields are quite clear which call for study. We must know all that can be known of primitive labor, of food supply, of the land; we must know all the facts available about machinery and its proper use; we must know the utmost of the principles which govern personal relations—relations to other men as individuals and relations to the state, and we must know far more than Americans in general have yet learned of that world of art within which alone a nation can fully express its spirit. The question of land is so important that any citizen, one might suppose, would be ashamed not to be expert in it. Before anything else we must have food, yet in our country, as in other modern states, men desert the farms for the cities, food becomes scarce or expensive, the country becomes the unproductive playground of the rich, the cities become the devouring furnaces in which the poor are burned up. These tendencies now repeating themselves in our own history have occurred many times before—in ancient Rome and in societies older still. What shall be done about it? Food must be raised, yet we cannot force men back to the soil if they wish to leave it—cannot, that is, unless the farmer's life is to be an actual slavery. How to teach men the importance of life on the soil, and how to make that life so rich in rewards that men will be content to serve in it—that is our economic task. But in America a closer contact with the soil is needed for intellectual reasons. Our society lacks the kind of wisdom most easily cultivated among men who work close to nature, and who do their thinking furthest removed from city artifice and from the tyranny of books. The country in which we find ourselves at this moment, France, illustrates what is called peasant wisdom, but what for us should be the plain commonsense of citizenship. Waiting here as we are for our turn to go home, we have at least the opportunity to watch the instinctive behavior of a great people taking up again the ways of peace. We can at the same moment study the programs of earnest statesmen, moving as they must in a world of theory, and we can see the French peasant once more happily tilling the beloved farm with mud-stains on his uniform, stains no longer of the trench but of that soil on which his forefathers worked. Such a man asks of peace the simple privilege of continuing his happy labor. What we all of us ask of peace is the opportunity to return to our private happiness. But when we have become too subtle in our theories, we may have lost the secret of that simple peace we desire; we need to be reminded constantly of the peasant point of view, of that elemental wisdom of the soil without which no nation has yet been great, and without which not the most optimistic of us can expect any lasting good fortune for our own country. This university does not hope to impart the precise truth in answer to the hard questions of today, for no man yet has found the answers. But we can remind ourselves here, and find the illustrations around us, that life rests primarily on very simple facts, that quite literally it rests on the soil, and that our thinking

should begin with a desire to keep close to earth, to make life on the land rich intellectually, profitable for the man who lives it, inspiring to his fellows.

When we turn from the farm to the city, we face the problem of machinery, which might be used as the metaphor of all modern difficulties. We have not yet found the right relation of machinery to man's happiness. Every inventor of a machine has no doubt believed that by that act he was decreasing the labor of the world and adding somewhat to men's leisure. Yet it has never been proved that those first British weavers were wrong who wished to annihilate the power looms. Those machines took man from the leisure and comfort of his home into the noise and torture of the factory. They destroyed the artisan and substituted the machine-tender. In the countries most progressive economically they discourage him who would make a complete and beautiful thing, who would make all of a chair or a table or a watch. By subdividing labor they have brought up a generation of machine hands who see but parts of the product and often have not even a thought of the whole. Leisure has not been increased in the world. The personal dignity of the laborer is constantly less. Joy in labor has gone out. Man is, as it were, caught in his own machine. We all realize this aspect of the modern world, even though we may think there is something to be said on the other side. What we usually say is that machinery is now with us, that its development is inevitable, that we can only ameliorate the disadvantages of it. Yet since we made it ourselves, the thought will cross our mind at such a moment as this, when the world is taking an inventory of its handicaps and its advantages, that what a man created himself he ought not to look upon as fate. It is our problem to regulate the machinery of the world with constant thought to the happiness and the dignity of the individual, so that even today he who makes things, be he dramatist or cobbler, shall have the full joy of creating, and shall keep his full dignity as a man.

In the larger sense also we are caught in the machinery of institutions. Once more the momentum of intellectual habit bids us fear the instrument we ourselves have made. Society makes us do this and that, we say, where as the conventions of society are of our contriving, and we are free to observe them or not as we choose. We say that it was dangerous for Germany to have so great an army, because with such a weapon in her hand the nation had no choice at last but to use it. Yet there is the same danger precisely from all other organizations, if man feebly lets go his power to change or to direct or to stop the machine he himself set in motion. What we are in danger of doing, if the lessons of history mean anything, is to suffer under our own institutions until we can suffer no longer, and then to go mad and inaugurate a revolution—as futile an approach to freedom as the British weavers made when they broke the power looms. We must educate ourselves to retain control of all the machinery of society, with the same hope for society that we cherish for the man in the factory—that none of us may lose or diminish the dignity that belongs to a human being, nor the sacredness of his own personality.

In the world of personal relations we shall have many problems which might well be discussed in this university. Perhaps they are too numerous to mention here. But the principle upon which they are to be decided is itself a question of the first order. Shall we force people to be good, to be healthy and to be happy according to some idea we may have of goodness or health or happiness, or shall we submit to them frankly in the most general education all the facts that science gives us in the field of ethics, of personal conduct? Education, let us remind ourselves again, is indeed a kind of force, for once a man has felt the charm of reason, he is not entirely free thereafter to make a fool of himself; at least he can do it only with regret. But the cruder kinds of force, the laws which seek to make man good by removing the possibility of being bad—we must decide sooner or later whether such laws do not practically educate men to be feeble of will and incapable of an

choice. One can conceive of society as of an army in which every citizen obeys the state only because he is driven to obedience. We can conceive of society as of an army in which every citizen submits to the same discipline, but for the far different reason that he realizes the value of cooperation. These societies may outwardly look the same, but the state of man in them is worlds apart. Liberty in both societies is indeed limited, in one by the police, in the other by the mind. It is not all clear at this moment that our own country is in the way of choosing that sort of discipline which reason alone dictates. We as citizens in our moment of study here may reflect upon this problem.

Not simply because we are here in France, the country of art, should we remind ourselves of our own poverty of expression. Our artistic life in comparison with that of other great nations is indeed poor. We love painting and architecture and music, but except for some of us who have studied those things in Europe, we are not as a nation far advanced in art. To say so frankly may hurt our pride, but it is necessary to recognize the fact if we are to mend it. The question presses home, I repeat, not simply because we are here in France, but because having measured ourselves beside other nations, we find we cannot adequately express the ideas and the ideals we know we possess. We are less expert in social manners, in letters, in the other arts than men of whom we think, much as we respect them, that they have a spiritual life not deeper than our own. If that is indeed our conviction, there is no choice but to train ourselves at once in the expression which we lack. Yet this training is advisable for deeper reasons than the mere desire to show ourselves in art the equals of other people. It is a fair question whether a man ever knows anything until he can express what he knows. Much American knowledge, we have come to suspect, is not knowledge at all, but a half-guessed thought or feeling, an inadequate information about something in general. The preciseness of the Frenchman, the Englishman's solid grasp of fact, are not the peculiar gifts of some one climate nor the inheritance of a particular blood—they are the results of training. If we admire such abilities we can make them our own.

IV

This university, then, though it may have a short career in this particular place, we hope will continue its work in the memory of all who come here, and in lasting influence on our country's future. We wish it to stand for the idea of national training. If society must use any force in self-protection, let us organize the intelligence of men, let us educate them. Let us make our fellows expert. We hope for fewer wars, but we have no wild dream that men will suddenly become unselfish or automatically wise. If wars are ever to cease it will be because society has learned how to avoid the causes of war. To this good end each one of us must see that our country takes its part by organizing what might be called a national army against ignorance, by taking arms against the prime cause of disease, of poverty, of crime, and of those strong prejudices which in times past have led men to hate each other.

A WORD FROM COMMISSIONER BUTTERFIELD

The time will come when the achievement of the American Army in building a University of five thousand students in the space of a month will be written into the history of education as one of its most unique paragraphs. We who are a part of it can feel the thrill of it and yet perhaps we do not see its full significance. But we may have gleams of its possibilities. It is not that we are endeavoring to do something spectacular, nor that we are active merely for the sake of keeping men out of mischief. Fundamentally we realize that America has a stupendous task ahead of it, a new role to play in the world's history. Our country has new power as a result of the demonstration

of its effectiveness in this war. It has come out of the war far stronger than it went into it. It has now the unquestioned economic leadership of the world and, fortunately, it also has the moral leadership of the world. All this means a new obligation. The obligation can be realized only through adequate leadership. This leadership must be trained, both into a clear insight of the problems at stake and effective capacity for fulfilling the tasks that are thus imposed. I take it that this is the real meaning of the American E. F. University. It proposes to start right now to help men to prepare themselves for this leadership. So here on the soil of France, which America has helped to rescue from destruction, and in the very heart of an ancient province through which have passed the ebbing and flowing tides of civilization, we find ourselves, teacher and students, but all Americans, cooperating in an endeavor to arrive at new power to meet the issues of a new day.

DR. KENYON L. BUTTERFIELD

Beaune, Cote d'Or, France
March 10, 1919

THE REGISTRAR SPEAKS

The work of the Registrar in attempting to set up for the enrollment of five thousand khaki-clad American citizens in a full grown American University on the mud-flats of France, has been like cutting a new path thru an uncharted forest, without compass or guide, under orders to make the path straight and to bring it to a known point on the other side of the woods. The point we are hewing towards is "full recognition for the work we are doing here in the best of the colleges and universities on the other side of the seas," and the path we were cutting was a direct line thru the wilderness of this war to that recognition and to the gain such recognition would be to us all. Our aim was to make the time spent in France count for the advancement of these citizens of America.

We began to make the set-up just three weeks ago. There were no college catalogs to serve as guides, no college faculties to consult, no courses announced, no college buildings in sight, and little save French mud out of which to make a great American University. There was no printing press, scarcely any typewriters and fewer typists; no text books and but one mimeograph, on which one machine the Superintendent was to multiply all his orders and forms and to spare time enough for the Registrar to print a bulky catalog of courses for fourteen colleges in a big university. There was plenty of paper at Is-sur-tille if we could command it; a French printing press in Paris if we could buy it; a power multigraph that could be obtained if we could only get the order thru the channels; and typewriters were coming and typists ordered in from the Y. M. C. A. girls in the A. E. F. Now the girls are here, typewriters are still coming, the paper came in with the studente, Paris is minus one small French printing press, and the motor to run it is on the way. The catalog is still manuscript, but it is ready for the press; some five hundred members of the faculty are listed and some five thousand students are registered. In three weeks, a real university has been set up for the running and in two more days will be in full action. It is now one of the largest of the American Universities, may in a few weeks be distinctly the very largest of all, and we trust, one of the best. It has been and is the purpose of the Army and of the American people who have come to our assistance to make all work done here grade with the best collegiate standards at home and to make our life together here upon these free fields of freedom-loving and art-loving Burgundy a distinct gain to the citizenry of our own country. All America—every corner of her—meets together in a corner of France in order to insure to our homeland a definite gain instead of a possible loss in our lengthening delay in troubled Europe. Gentlemen, we have a great task to do in Beaune.

RICHARD WATSON COOPER

HEADQUARTERS
AMERICAN E. F. UNIVERSITY

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Applied Arts and Education

BY

GEORGE S. HELLMAN

Director of College of Fine and Applied Arts.

BEAUNE, COTE D'OR, FRANCE

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LIVINGSTON WATROUS,

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APPLIED ARTS AND EDUCATION

*Address of **George S. HELLMAN**
at the Educational Conference,
American E. F. University, Beaune, Côte-d'Or.
Tuesday, April 8, 1919.*

You will notice, gentlemen, that in the sub-title which, on your programs, indicates the subject for this hour's discussion, there appears the phrase « Applied Arts ». Yet what is the exact line of demarcation between the Fine and Applied Arts ? In a general way, one speaks of utility as the predominating motive of the Applied, and aesthetic pleasure as the predominating motive of the Fine Arts. This is a working hypothesis, but it often works unsatisfactorily. Take for instance a chair whose lovely tapestry has been woven after a design of some great painter and whose frame has been wrought with all the skill of some rare carver of wood. What shall we call this creation, wherein at least three branches of art are represented ? I fancy that while you are standing before it, and your eye delights in its charm of form and color, you might call it an example of the Fine Arts. But when you are tired and almost worn out, perhaps after a day of Educational Conferences, and you sink back into its comfortable arms, you might

feel that you were coming into what we might call intimate contact with an example of the Industrial Arts. Or, leaving aside utility and beauty and coming to the thought of conception and of technical skill, we speak, with far more reason, of the inspiration of the artist and the craftsmanship of the artisan. But how about the great periods when the artist was also the craftsman? Then again, consider a noble title page, designed by an Aldus or an Elzevir. Is this fine or or is this Commercial Art? If you can help me to a full and satisfactory distinction, I would gladly offer a prize for such aid. I would offer a stove, really a very decent looking stove, that I have in my cold and damp room here. I bought it from a departing Captain (you recall Kipling's verse « The Captains and the Kings depart »), a Captain, who failed to inform me that the stove pipe, which might have added to its utility, was all too firmly fixed in the roof of his building. I think you will agree with me that in consummating that sale this capable officer achieved a work of fine art well applied.

Art is like life itself, something to be viewed as a whole. Where there is original beauty in a man-created work, that work is entitled to be considered an example of the Fine Arts. The test is beauty, and not utility in its obvious connotation, and I will go so far as to maintain that beauty itself is the most essential of all utilities. We are all of us, in varying degree, lovers of beauty; all of us react to forms of beauty, whether it be the human form, or the forms that nature displays, or the forms of art. Our earliest efforts at expression when, hardly out of babyhood, we make our childish drawings, illustrate the instinct of art inherent, in the human race. Sir Thomas Browne used a lovely phrase when he called Nature « the art of God »; I think we might amplify it by thinking of all beauty as allied to the nature of divin-

ity, so deep is the mystical saying of Keats that beauty and truth are one, and so wise the philosophy of Kant, who, after the course of his logic had led him to his baffling antinomies, found the assurance of divine power in the beauty of a starlit night.

That, then, in an army of young Americans, there should be thousands so lured by the vision of beauty as to wish to make its practise their life work, should really not come as a surprise to any of us. If it has come as a surprise to some, it is merely because we are a young country, necessarily lacking in art traditions, lacking old churches and castles, and the loveliness which time itself confers upon architecture. But traditions must begin somewhere, and what time is better than this to begin our own traditions of art ? This is a time of great beginnings, and our army can bring no more inspiring message to our nation than this, that the art impulse is strong and enthusiastic among the youth of America. I am confident, gentlemen, that in the years that are soon to come, it is our land that will wrest from Europe the leadership in the realm of art ; for Europe is old and weary and we are fresh and young ; and youth is the time when ideals are strongest, and art is that phase of human activities, wherein ideals with most loveliness are expressed. One thing only is needful, and that is a sympathetic public. The individual is the creator, but he cannot work at his best if his fellow-citizens do not appreciate his creation. This is the main reason that in the past our artists have gone to Europe. I think it will be different in the future. It is for us to grow in taste ; in the knowledge that the beauty of our homes, of our cities, is directly related to the national life ; that surroundings of beauty make for enjoyment, for self-respect, for finer citizenship in every direction. We are henceforth done with the old belief that art is a thing apart, a frill, a mere orna-

ment of life — something almost effeminate. We can learn at this very University that hands which held firmly the bloody bayonet are now eager to grasp the architect's T-square, the painter's palette, the chisel of the sculptor. We need no longer hark back to the days of Pericles, or learn from warrior kings and dukes of Italy and of France, that art is a masculine force to be encouraged and cherished by fearless peoples; our own officers and enlisted men are teaching us this truth. I wish you could see, as we have seen, the soldier-students at the A. E. F. Art Training Center near Paris, at work till taps were sounded; and we all can assure you that the art students here will do likewise, if Col. Reeves, our kind and far-visioned local God, will every evening say to the camp electricians : « Let there be light ! ».

The conducting of art classes involves considerations which are obviously different from those that are taken into account in the development of other branches of education, and it has been found most practicable to concentrate, up to the present time, the efforts of all of us who have been associated in the Department of Fine and Applied Arts in directions that may be briefly outlined as follows.

Here at Beaune between three and four hundred architects, painters, sculptors and Industrial and Commercial art students are now busily at work. At Bellevue, near Paris, a branch of this University is established under the name of the A. E. F. Art Train Center, with another group of between two and three hundred art students, the majority of them men of advanced qualifications — although at Beaune there are also a considerable number of advanced students who appreciate the opportunities afforded in a district noted for its natural as well as its architectural beauty. At Beaune and at Bellevue are fine libraries, while earnest faculties are conducting the

courses, faculties in large part drawn from the Army itself; and to these two centers should come in the main the greater body of our students from the A. E. F. A third locality for our instruction is Paris, where the exterior ateliers of the Ecole des Beaux-Arts provide for a group of approximately a hundred soldier-artists who have found places there by virtue of those G. H. Q. Orders which brought members of the A. E. F. to the Sorbonne. The fourth phase of our work is termed the Hospital Section, and here we have some three hundred students working, under immediate direction of fifteen art teachers drawn from the women of the Y. M. C. A. and the A. R. C. This hospital work, now going on in the Paris, the Bordeaux and the Brest areas, is being constantly extended, and is in some ways the most appealing phase of all, in view of the joy and benefit brought into the very homes of suffering.

There is no need to dwell at length upon the necessities that have led to a program wherein the art student is brought to special places, as the College here, Bellevue, and the Paris ateliers — instead of dissipating the energies of a comparatively small body of art instructors in the wider areas. Whereas syllabi and text-books can to some extent solve the question in other branches of study, the art student, on the physical side of his material, needs tables and drawing boards and easels and casts, and clay and plaster, in addition to the more easily distributed and expendible material such as paper and paints, etc. We have, roughly, one thousand artists now at work and about seventeen hundred requests already at hand from other art students. If the total should reach, as it well may, 3,500 or 4,000 art students in the A. E. F., that would mean that out of every 400 soldiers one is an artist, or an artist in the making. Obviously, questions both of transportation and

obtaining of material and the sending forth of instructors make it almost impossible to conduct on any thorough scale Divisional or Post instruction. Even so, art classes have been established both at Le Mans and at Coblenz, and prior to the inclusion of applicants for Beaune or Bellevue, efforts to give all art students some opportunities while they are with their Divisions are worth while. It is only fair to suggest to the Divisional school leaders that these efforts will not show much result as far as numbers are concerned, but the potentialities of the artist, his value for his nation and all mankind, are so inspiring that if even a comparatively few are reached, this interim effort may prove to be of the most gratifying worth.

Organizing and conducting art classes in Divisional schools might perhaps be as follows : The Post school director, through proper channels, can obtain the name of art students in his area and forward them to the Divisional school authorities, who should then confer with the proper military authorities concerning the gathering together of such groups of art students in a Divisional art school, to which an instructor or instructors can then be sent. In announcing such a possibility to the students themselves, it should be made clear that no application by them in this direction will mitigate against their inclusion at the earliest possible moment at Beaune or at Bellevue if their applications for such inclusion shall have already been forwarded through military channels. The Army is in position to furnish all necessary materials. It is well also to remember that drawing is the basis of all art courses, and that, however casual may seem this beginning, it is worth while for each Divisional leader to requisition at once, sketch books, drawing paper, pencils, T-squares, colors and brushes, so that the individual art student

may find something to do in this intermediate period. Moreover, the Divisional leaders should seek to obtain from the military authorities passes which will enable art students to see the surrounding country, with its churches, old castles, and such museums as are in their neighborhood; or even the farm buildings, and natural beauty in other localities. Army authorities will very readily appreciate that latitude for the art student is only incidentally a pleasurable privilege and is essentially the most important part of his work. Thus the first step that the directors of Divisional and Post schools may easily take is to equip individuals or little groups so as to enable the painters to do water-color sketching and the architects to make pencil sketches and take measurements of whatever may be interesting in their vicinity.

Where possible, and as spring advances into the summer months, art students should be given week-end study trips, preferably in army trucks, carrying their rations with them. The result of the studies that they make during such trips should be criticised by their instructor, and it may be feasible in some cases to arrange little exhibitions of such work. And here, let me remind you, and most of all, let me remind my fellow-Directors in other Colleges of the University, that the art phase of our entire educational program is a particularly grateful phase, not alone for the students, but also for the faculty. The work of these young artists is so interesting, even to the casual observer, and is so immediately available as an indication of results, that the Department in charge of this work gains, without any special merit of its own, recognition not so immediately available to perhaps far stronger Departments whose work lies in other directions. All of us who are in charge of the work would therefore be unwilling to let the

present opportunity go by without very frankly admitting the special advantage which thus, by the very nature of things, accrues to a body of instructors and student whose results can thus be visualised.

I wish I had time, gentlemen, to tell you, or rather, I wish you had time to hear of some of the episodes connected with our work; of groups of soldiers saying: « This is too good to be true, » and already asking what they can do to be continued here after the first period of the three months is over. Nor did they know what a pang their query brought, with the thought of those 1700 fellows — perhaps 2000 by now — who are waiting their turn; though with Gen. Rees and Col. Reeves and the Commissioners as their friends, we all hope their time will come soon. And then I should like to tell you more of the many officers and enlisted men, and of the women in the Hospital courses, who share with a handful of loyal and devoted men from civil life the responsibility of our teaching staff, some fifty or sixty in all, eager to help their thousand students. In a study trip of forty of our advanced architects and sculptors to Dijon last Sunday, I saw one of our Majors lying flat on the street measuring the base of a column, a Lieutenant on a step-ladder taking measurements of the capital, while an enlisted man sketched the façade of the building. Art makes for fellowship between nations as between individuals. Whether in poetry, in music, in painting or in architecture, it is the sole universal language, and as the appreciation of beauty in the scheme of existence grows among mankind, war itself will become more and more remote.